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SUBJECT: Chinese Engagement in Cote d'Ivoire; Few Potential Areas for Cooperation

REF: STATE 10152

¶1. (SBU) On February 4, Pol/Econ Chief met with Lu Pang, Economic Commercial Counselor at the Chinese Embassy, along with first secretary Luo-Fa Yang to discuss reftel issues. Both men said that China has very few commercial activities or assistance programs in Cote d'Ivoire, citing difficulties in dealing with an uncoordinated government where each Ministry is run by a different political party, and where there is no "primary channel" with which to deal.

¶2. (SBU) In terms of development assistance, China has a small (2 million renminbi or \$300,000 annually) program to provide anti-malarial drugs to Cote d'Ivoire. Pang noted, however, that this program was in jeopardy, as WHO guidelines now advised against using some of the drugs that China had been supplying. Instead, the GOCI has suggested that the Chinese help equip some hospitals, a request that they are considering, according to Pang. In addition, China has a small rice cultivation program in Kikotou, and is building a hospital in Gagnoa.

¶3. (SBU) According to statistics from 1996-2006, Chinese investment in Cote d'Ivoire is the automobile, wood, mechanics, pharmaceutical, textile, and fishing sectors, and totals around USD 30 million. Pang reviewed this list, confirming them all except for a 2006 chemical plant project. He said there had been no new investments since 2006, although many have been under discussion: "The process is too long." One of their last major projects was construction of the "Maison des Deputes" in Yamoussoukro (for the use of the National Assembly members) in 2006, according to Pang. Asked about rumors that the Chinese had been given a contract to construct the third major bridge in Abidjan, Pang laughed and said that it was news to him, noting that he suspected the French would wind up building it. With regards to a proposed 750 MW hydro-electric dam, Pang replied that the Chinese Export Import Bank and the World Bank have been discussing this project for three or four years, but have yet to finalize all the details. He said the GOCI was not an obstacle to the project, however.

¶4. (SBU) In a early February meeting with her Chinese counterpart, the DCM was told that the Chinese government is taking a wait and see attitude about further engagement in Cote d'Ivoire until after Presidential elections (Note: which have been postponed six times, and which are currently at an impasse due to political wrangling. End Note). Given USG bilateral sanctions against the GOCI, chances for any meaningful collaboration between our two countries until after elections take place appear to be slim to non-existent.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Given the fact that the USG currently has bilateral sanctions against the GOCI, coupled with a rather lackluster Chinese involvement in Coted'Ivoire, it does not appear

that there is much scope for collaboration between o  
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